

Partnership that holds great promise

Asean-Australia ties can be further enriched, says PM

MELBOURNE: The Asean-Australia partnership has tremendous potential to be further enriched, including in strengthening Asean's micro, small and medium enterprise (MSME) ecosystem and accelerating its energy transition journey, says Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim

Highlighting areas for enhanced cooperation, the Prime Minister who was at the Asean-Australia Special Summit in Melbourne yesterday, called for accelerated business utilisation and engagement under the ambit of the Asean-Australia-New Zealand Free Trade Agreement, especially for MSMEs.

At the plenary session of the summit, Anwar pointed out that Malaysia is committed to the development of MSMEs as drivers of employment, innovation and economic dynamism.

"Malaysia sees much potential for Australia's support in strengthening Asean's MSME ecosystem, particularly through digital transformation, capacity building, market access, sustainable practices and enabling equitable par-

ticipation of MSMEs," he said.

Addressing climate change via an energy transition journey and collaboration, Anwar said Malaysia pledged to achieve a just transition in the energy sector, including net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050, in its National Energy Transition Roadmap.

"We look forward to collaboration with Australia as Asean seeks to accelerate its energy transition journey.

"As we progress, we should be mindful of each other's different economic needs and move to ensure that the transition is just, inclusive and equitable for all, where issues on climate finance, incentives, technology and infrastructure are adequately addressed," he said.

Malaysia will host the first annual Asean Green Jobs Forum in Kuala Lumpur next month, with the support of Australia, where the cross-sectoral initiative is expected to contribute to green jobs and green skills development in the region, he said.

On human capital development, Anwar said Australia's sup-

Beary nice to meet you: Anwar feeding a koala at the Government House for the Leaders' Retreat during the 50th Asean-Australia Special Summit in Melbourne. — AFP



port, including through the Asean TVET Council, towards fostering talent development in the region is very much welcomed.

He called for expanding cooperation on technical and vocational education and training (TVET) to include new disciplines such as green technologies, the Fourth Industrial Revolution and artificial intelligence.

On connectivity, Anwar said Malaysia will co-host the Maritime Connectivity Forum with Australia and South Korea in June this year and looked forward to experts engaging on port digitalisation and automation to further enhance infrastructure capacity.

In facilitating Timor Leste's transition to full Asean membership, Anwar said Malaysia, Australia and Timor Leste suc-

cessfully implemented a trilateral capacity-building programme in 2023, and respective officials are currently in discussion on the second instalment of the programme, which will be implemented later this year.

In his address, Anwar, in celebrating the 50th anniversary of Asean-Australia Dialogue Relations, lauded Australia's historical role as Asean's first external partner, emphasising the deep-rooted connections and mutual commitments that have shaped the partnership's evolution, Bernama reported.

He said Asean-Australia relations had flourished and progressed exponentially across the three pillars, spurred by a common vision for peace, stability and prosperity, and exceptional

people-to-people relations.

"The Asean-Australia partnership generates ripple effects of positive change that touch the lives of countless individuals across our region and potentially beyond," he said.

"Mindful of this and against the increasingly uncertain global landscape, let us continue forward constructively for a safer and better future for all."

The Asean-Australia special summit in Melbourne is held to celebrate 50 years since Australia became Asean's first dialogue partner.